

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-2 canceled.

Claim 3 (currently amended): An energy-efficient method of packaging a food product, comprising the steps of:

selecting a blow-molded PET plastic container (10) having a sidewall (11) with a plurality of peripheral ~~vertical~~ vertically-spaced grooves (11d), a dome (12) located above said sidewall (11) having a blown, wide-mouth opening (12a) adapted to receive a sealed closure, a footed base (13) below said sidewall (11), an upper label bumper (15) extending around the upper end (11a) of said sidewall (11) subjacent said dome (12), a lower label bumper (16) extending around the lower end (11b) of said sidewall (11) superadjacent said base (13);

hot-filling the container (10) with said food product;

capping the filled container (10);

heating the filled and capped container (10) for a time at a temperature sufficient to pasteurize said food product; and

cooling the pasteurized filled and capped container (10) to ambient temperature.

Claim 4 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein said food product is a volatile vegetable in an aqueous medium.

Claim 5 (original): The method according to claim 4 wherein said volatile vegetable is selected from the group consisting of: pickles, relish, sauerkraut and artichokes.

Claim 6 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein said filled and capped container is heated to a temperature in a range of at least about 190 - 210°F for a period in a range of 5 - 20 minutes.

Claim 7 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein said hot-filling steps occur at a temperature of at least about 180°F.

Claim 8 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein the container is at ambient temperature prior to hot-filling.

Claim 9 (currently amended): An energy-efficient method of packaging a volatile food product that requires pasteurization at elevated temperatures after the food product is packaged in a container that has been filled and capped, comprising the steps of:

hot-filling a blow-molded plastic container with said volatile food product at a temperature of at least 180°F, said container having a sidewall stiffened against distortion, a dome located above said sidewall and having an opening adapted to receive a sealed closure, a base located below said sidewall, an upper label bumper extending around an upper end of said sidewall subjacent said dome, and

a lower label bumper extending around a lower end of said sidewall superadjacent said base;

capping said container immediately after said hot-filling step;

heating said container and packaged volatile food product after said capping step to a temperature in a range of at least about 190-210°F for a time sufficient to pasteurize said food product without subjecting the base to undesirable distortion;

and

cooling said container and packaged volatile food product after said heating step to ambient temperature.

Claim 10 (previously presented): A method according to claim 9, wherein said base of said container is a pressure-resistant footed base that withstands super-baric pressures experienced within said container after said container is hot-filled, capped and heated and that withstands a swing from super-baric pressures to sub-baric pressures experienced within said container as said volatile food product cools to ambient temperature.

Claim 11 (previously presented): A method according to claim 10, wherein said base has a plurality of radially extending ribs that extend outwardly from adjacent a longitudinal axis of said container toward an outer surface of said base, and wherein said ribs rigidify said base by resisting flexural movement of said base during said hot-filling, heating and cooling steps.

Claim 12 (previously presented): A method according to claim 11, wherein said sidewall is cylindrical except for a plurality of vertically-spaced, circumferentially-extending, inset

grooves, said grooves having equal spacing therebetween and enable side sidewall of said container to accommodate, without undesirable distortion, super-baric pressures experienced within said container during said heating step and a swing from super-baric pressures to sub-baric pressures experienced within said container as said volatile food product cools to ambient temperature.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The method according to claim 12, wherein said food product is a volatile vegetable in an aqueous medium.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method according to claim 13, wherein said volatile vegetable is selected from the group consisting of: pickles, relish, sauerkraut and artichokes.

Claim 15 previously presented): The method according to claim 14, wherein during said heating step said container and packaged volatile food product is heated to a temperature in a range of at least about 190-210°F for a period in a range of about 5 to 20 minutes.

Claim 16 (previously presented): A method according to claim 15, wherein said opening is a wide mouth opening having a diameter sufficient to afford access to and withdrawal of said food product by means of a conventional item of tableware.

Claim 17 (previously presented): A method according to claim 16, wherein said sidewall of said blow molded plastic container has a crystallinity in excess of 25%.

Claim 18 (previously presented): A method according to claim 17, wherein said wide mouth opening of said blow molded plastic container is defined by blow molded, threaded neck.

Claim 19 (previously presented): A method according to claim 18, wherein said container is made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

Claim 20 (new): The method according to claim 3, wherein a diameter of the wide-mouth opening is at least about 80% of a diameter of a cross-section of the container at the sidewall.

Claim 21 (new): The method according to claim 9, wherein a diameter of the opening is at least about 80% of a diameter of a cross-section of the container at the sidewall.